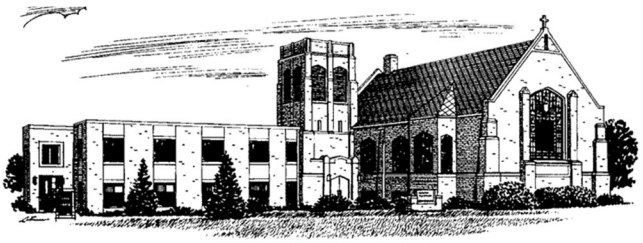
SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085



Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: oleson@saronlutheran.org

Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com

Irma Gorman, Organist

Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
bradley717@gmail.com

Ken Boyd, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

Sara Porter, Childcare Specialist
Email: portersara20@gmail.com

Typical Sunday at Saron:

Fall, Winter and Spring (began Sept 10):
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40am Learning Hour for Ages 3-Adult
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

Summer (begins May 26, 2024):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia
Saron's Mission: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!*

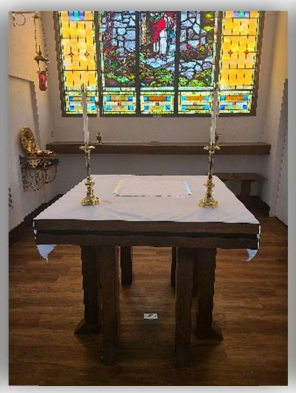
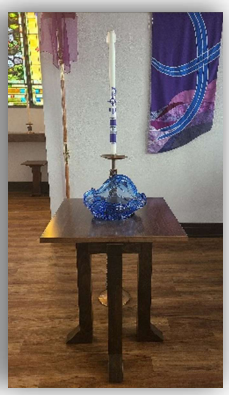
PASTOR JOAN'S ARTICLE FOR MARCH 2024

Have you ever planned something but then were surprised and pleased at how it turned out and the responses given? Such has been the case here at Saron with the Epiphany moments featuring the ministries of the ELCA and now hearing about vanishing species during our midweek Lenten worship. In both cases I am hearing with regularity, "I didn't know that" and "That made me look into ____ or explore _____ more deeply." And always how these things point out that faith and life are not separate entities but always interconnected. If you'd like to learn more about the ELCA ministries, explore www.elca.org.

You may have noticed that I love the young ones running or skipping up to the children's time on Sundays. What joy they have and show with all the surprises that come with it. I never know what they will say or ask or what direction our time together will take. This Lenten season, as we rolled out our new labyrinth, I noticed it was several of these same youth who got excited first. With no prompting, they knew what to do, as they had experienced it in the Fall. They took off their shoes and walked (or pretty much danced) their way along the path. They are learning and experiencing the faith. We all can learn from them. I pray that we do.

- Pastor Joan

NEW FURNISHINGS

Our new pulpit, altar and baptismal font have arrived! These lighter, both physically and aesthetically, pieces will allow us to be more flexible in the way we use our space. We look forward to using them through many seasons of the church over many years.

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Joan
Monday-Thursday Mornings
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 9am-noon
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)
Ken Boyd (Bookkeeper):
Tuesday Mornings and by Appointment

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (269/983-1273) or contacting the council president.

Note: Emails for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org to ensure privacy. Emails to Amanda and the church office should be sent to info@saronlutheran.org.

Caring and Sharing

IN OUR PRAYERS

Tom Taylor is at Caretel in St. Joseph;
John Olson is at Woodland Terrace in Bridgman.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

3/1 Michael Hoodlebrink
3/4 Krin Jurgensen
3/4 Caleb Pudell
3/8 Austin Kamala
3/9 Colbe Pudell
3/10 Brad Frey
3/12 Susan Rood
3/14 Ruth Stelling
3/17 Mia Bradley
3/18 Peter Johnson
3/18 Constance Slater
3/19 Karleann Stankiewicz
3/21 Kaitlin Hooper
3/22 Janet Oleson
3/23 Molly Becker
3/25 James Nicholas
3/26 Sue Bailey
3/27 Eloise Moely
3/28 Matthew Gacek

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

3/2 Tom & Janet Taylor

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round!"

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

CONGRATULATIONS

We were blessed to welcome **Molly Joan Hooper** into God's family on February 25 through the act of Holy Baptism. Molly is the daughter of Nick & Kati Hooper and granddaughter of Rian & Judi Huff. Sponsors are Andrew and Celeste Huff. Welcome, Molly! We are excited to have you as part of Saron's congregation and to watch you grow into your faith.

PRAYER LABYRINTH

We are excited to announce we have made our own prayer labyrinth! It is set up in the upstairs lounge and will be available to walk during Lent. If you aren't sure when the building is open, contact the church office and we'll help you figure out a good time. We are still adding elements so keep coming back to see the changes.

Huge thank you to Kathy Bergh for painting the actual, complicated, labyrinth lines and to Laurie Caple for adding the many precious embellishments.

FORTIFY & fly

It's been feeling like spring lately but it's actually the season of quotes! We have received numbers from the painters and the technology committee is waiting for quotes on potential lighting upgrades. At that point, church council will be consulted for next steps, which may include us gathering for a congregational vote. We will give plenty of notice if that is the direction we need to take. Watch your email for more information.

As always, thank you for being with us on this journey and know that we will keep you informed until all projects are complete and all the money has been responsibly spent.

Worship

NEW: ASSISTED HEARING DEVICES

Our new sound system in the sanctuary came with headphones to help those having difficulty hearing the worship service. If this may be of benefit to you, ask Marcus if you can try one out.

SENSORY BAGS

As part of extending an unconditional welcome to all, we now have Sensory Bags available for use during worship or at other times when helpful. These bags contain a variety of fidgets that can help someone feel more able to sit quietly and/or focus. We also have noise canceling headphones for those who are sound sensitive. These brightly colored bags can be found in the narthex.

PRAYER GROUP

You are invited to offer your prayer petitions (concerns or thanksgivings) via our attendance cards each Sunday. Requests can also be made confidentially online via a link in our Thursday mailings. You may include as much detail as you wish. Requests are then given to the Monday prayer group. **You are also invited to be part of the Monday group at 11am.** We follow a simple format of morning prayer and insert the petitions and prayers for Saron's ministry and the world. You don't even have to pray aloud, if you would prefer to pray quietly. Most weeks we are done in 30 minutes. If you want to know more about this ministry, please contact Pastor Joan.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by contacting the church office. Please note any occasion/thanksgiving to be recognized in the bulletin. Flowers are $35 per vase. Checks are payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Take them home to enjoy then **simply return the vase to Saron.**

Nursery

Nursery service is available during worship. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is primarily directed towards our youngest members and guests. For preschoolers that need more physical and/or emotional space, activities are available in the narthex, including clipboards with coloring pages and children's bulletins. **It's vital to embrace family units in all stages and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The goal of the nursery is to provide a safe environment to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families. We recognize that may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions.

We are always looking for additional helpers to share the load. Contact Marilyn Lucy (269/759-3464) with questions or interest.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

March 3: 3rd Sunday in Lent
Exodus 20:1-17
Psalm 19
I Corinthians 1:18-25
John 2:13-22

March 10: 4th Sunday in Lent
Numbers 21:4-9
Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22
Ephesians 2:1-10
John 3:14-21

March 17: 5th Sunday in Lent
Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalm 51:1-12
Hebrews 5:5-10
John 12:20-33

March 24: Palm Sunday
Isaiah 50:4-9
Psalm 31:9-16
Philippians 2:5-11
Mark 14:1 - 15:47

March 31: Resurrection of our Lord, Easter Sunday
Acts 10:34-43
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
Mark 16:1-8

YOUTH GROUP

Our youth group (middle school and high school kids) are planning several events for the next few months, including a pool party & taco bar. Watch your email for more information.

This group typically meets once per month after the late service for food, fun and fellowship. Friends are always welcome! **Contact Scott at scottgaspari@outlook.com with any questions or to be added to the email list.**

ELCA YOUTH GATHERING

A huge thank you to everyone who worked on the Super Chili Bowl last month and especially to those who came out for lunch. We hope you had a great time and ate some great food. We appreciate your generous support of our youth attending the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans this July. As of printing, they now have $1,645 towards their fundraising goal. We are blown away!

In the coming months, we will continue to offer ways for our congregation to support our teens through prayers and fundraising. The chaperones will also need lots of prayers! Stay tuned!

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

We have many educational options to fit your needs and schedule. Always feel welcome to join us, at any time and for as many sessions as works for you.

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

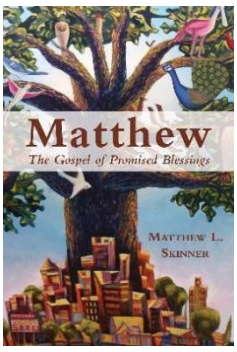
Our program year is underway. We have opportunities for many ages and stages!

The Sunday Learning Hour (9:40am-10:30am) offers the following options:

- Preschool - Grade 5: Sunday School
- Grades 6-8: Confirmation Classes
- High School - Adult: Adult Forum

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

The Thursday morning Bible study returns after Easter, beginning **April 4 at 9:30am**, with plans for April 4 and 11 still in the works. Watch for details. On **April 18**, we will begin the soon to be released series, "Matthew - The Gospel of Promised Blessings" by Matthew Skinner, a professor at Luther Seminary. From Cokesbury:

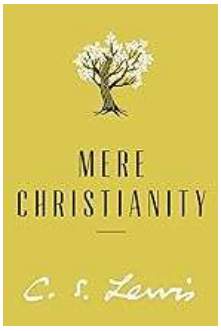


The Gospel of Matthew portrays Jesus and his message as full of tender compassion and urgent warning. This six-part exploration of an enigmatic Gospel takes readers into the themes, topics, and tensions at the heart of Matthew's story about the life and work of Jesus. Chapters focus on blessing and comfort, judgment and retribution, the meaning of discipleship, Jesus' vision for the Church and world, conflicts and complaints, and how the Gospel of Matthew speaks to believers today.

You are encouraged to let Pastor know that you plan to attend so a book can be ordered for you. Cost: $13.50. You can also order your own copy, or an e-book version.

TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

Following the Lenten break, the Tuesday Evening Bible Study will resume on **April 2**. For the upcoming study, we will read and discuss the book *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis. Published in 1952, the book is drawn from a collection of BBC radio talks that Lewis gave during World War II. David Vandenburgh will lead the study, which is estimated to run 12 weeks.



Although you may know the author best for his *Chronicles of Narnia* fantasy series (think *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*), C. S. Lewis is also a noted author of Christian apologetics, i.e. defenses of the faith. In *Mere Christianity*, he argues that there is a fundamental moral law that governs the universe and that Christianity offers the best explanation for this law. It should make for some fascinating and enlightening discussions. Mere Christianity is available in several formats from various internet sellers in a range of prices and is also available at local libraries.

We meet **Tuesday evenings at 6pm** in the upstairs lounge for one hour then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. **All are welcome!**

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email:
Bob Kynast (269-921-2786, bobkynast@gmail.com)
Don Hafer (269-985-3637, hafer.don@gmail.com)

We are taking a break for Wednesday evening Lenten services (and soup suppers!). We will begin again after Easter with a two-session topic, *Dealing With the Politics of Outrage*, on April 3 and 17. We meet at 7pm in the lounge. **Contact Ed Staude at 636/288-1016 with any questions.** All are welcome!

Join us on **March 3 at 6:30pm in the lounge** as we discuss *Chronicles of a Radical Hag* (with recipes) by Lorna Landvik. Amazon says, "A bittersweet, seriously funny novel of the life of a curmudgeon, a small town and a key to our troubled times traced through a newspaper columnist's 50 years of taking on the world."

Then mark **April 7** on your calendar for something different: *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby van Pelt. "Humans, for the most part, you are dull and blundering. But occasionally, you can be remarkably bright creatures." (Amazon) Marcellus, a giant Octopus who can speak, forges an unlikely connection with Tova, a grieving widow, who works at the Sowell Bay Aquarium where Marcellus lives. Suspend your sense of reality and lean into the impossible and be enthralled.

Come help us sort out opinions on both of these books. You will be in for a good time. If you want to be included on the mailing list to receive meeting reminders, updates or Zoom information, please contact Kathy Cowall at (269)428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com.

A book is like a garden carried in your pocket.
- Chinese Proverb

Women of the ELCA

DEBORAH CIRCLE

Due to a scheduled Lenten soup supper and service, Deborah Circle will **NOT** meet in March. We will be participating in a service project which will be detailed in a group email soon. **If you have any questions about this group, contact Melanie at 269/449-8399.**

ANNUAL WOMEN'S RETREAT

Mark your calendar for the annual Women's Retreat, scheduled for **May 4, 2024 from 9am - 4pm** at the home of Linda Pater. The cost for the day will be **$15**, which will include breakfast and a late lunch. This is a wonderful opportunity to renew old friendships and make new ones. Plan to attend this time of good fun, good food, and good fellowship. There will be a sign-up sheet in the narthex at the beginning of April. If you have any questions, feel free to call **Linda at 269/369-1178**. Hope to see you there!

MENTOR FAMILY FUND

In the past, our women's group has collected money for our mentor fund through bake sales and other monetary contributions. These funds have been used to help people with utility bills, medical concerns, food for holidays, Christmas gifts and miscellaneous needs. In 2023, we helped with a car problem, Christmas gifts for 9 children and holiday food for 2 families. Monetary gifts through the year are always welcome. If you would like to contribute to the fund, checks can be written to Saron Church Women with Mentor Fund as the memo. Thank you to all who have supported our efforts!

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

THE BENTON HARBOR
SOUP KITCHEN™
HEART-TO-HEART™

For I was hungry and you gave me food.
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.
I was a stranger and you welcomed me.
- Matthew 25:35

On a cold January 25, Doug Wold, Jim Manore, Ed Brunner and Mary Alice Brunner were busy at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen preparing lunches for 66 guests. Guests were able to stay warm and enjoy a ham dinner, including cookies prepared by Kathi Anserello & various Saron members.

If you are able to help with the preparation and serving, or by providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email or contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

NOISY OFFERING

ELCA WORLD HUNGER

We receive a noisy offering
(or those not-so-noisy bills)
on the first Sunday of each month.
These gifts are sent to
ELCA World Hunger.

Thank you for your continued support!

EYE GLASS COLLECTION

Lions RECYCLE For Sight

Help Someone With Your Old Eye Glasses! Do you have any old pairs of glasses? Lions Club International has provided a collection box in the narthex. We have several Saron members who are Lions that can deliver our glasses to the club. Consider donating your old glasses to the Lions rather than storing them or throwing them away. Thank you!

INTERFAITH ACTION

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

The first step in getting involved, is getting informed. Register to receive their communications at https://swmichinterfaith.org/contact1

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

If you ever have any questions or need clarification on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Connor Ashley: cashley1837@outlook.com
Laurel Gacek: 269/470-6062 or mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks: 517/930-0579 or lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel: 269/313-4062 or kiessel@me.com
Pr Joan Oleson: 269/983-1273 or oleson@saronlutheran.org
Lindsay Gaspari: 847/373-8826 or lindsay.gaspari@yahoo.com

Support

The Support Committee typically meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey at josephulrey@yahoo.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Facilities

HELPING HANDS (Previously Golden Hammers)

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands.

Other Bits of News

BURIAL PLOTS AVAILABLE

Are you, or someone you love, in need of a burial plot? Saron has been gifted with two adult plots, which can be divided, at **North Shore Memory Garden in Coloma**, as well as a niche for two end-to-end caskets in the Mausoleum. We are offering these at a reduced current value with proceeds going to the Endowment Fund. If interested, or you have questions, contact **Liz Kunkel (269/429-1132) or Pastor.**

ZOOM COFFEE HOUR

We will continue the Wednesday Zoom Coffee Hour at 11am as long as there is interest. The link is sent out each Tuesday afternoon. All are welcome, for a few minutes or the whole hour!

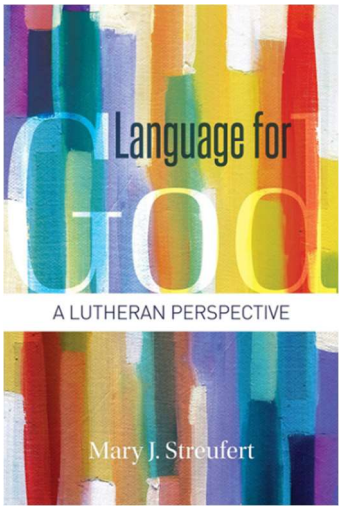
FACEBOOK

We often share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page. We do not put names with the pictures. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Pastor.

In 2025, Saron will celebrate our 150th anniversary! This will be a big deal and a huge undertaking, with events throughout that whole year. The committee has been formed to begin preliminary planning. Watch for details to emerge and if you are interested in helping, don't worry, there will be plenty of opportunities to join subcommittees this year.

UNIQUE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY!

A six-week Bible study, entitled "Language for God: A Lutheran Perspective," is continueing to be held the Sundays of Lent after the second service. Led by Pastors Wayne Shearier and Joan Oleson, and based on the book of the same name by Dr. Mary Streufert, the study meets at **12:30pm in the dining room**. Pizza will be served.



Even if you were not able to join us, we encourage you to read the book and be challenged. It's available on Amazon or reach out to Pastor to borrow a copy as soon as the study concludes.

CORNER OF CUTENESS!

Springtime Thoughts on Stewardship

STEWARDS IN ALL SEASONS

Stewardship is what we do after we say we believe. To long-term Lutherans, this catch phrase that we introduced in our stewardship messages last year is likely recognizable as describing the very essence of being Lutheran. But for those newer to our faith tradition or even if it's just been a while since you sat in confirmation class, reviewing our Lutheran heritage may help put the phrase in proper perspective.

Martin Luther was a 16th century priest who had serious issues with Roman Catholic doctrine, foremost of which was his disagreement with the belief that salvation was the result of faith plus good works. Luther believed that salvation was the result of faith alone, and he was adamantly opposed to the Catholic practice of requiring paid indulgences (or good works) to compensate for sins. His position didn't sit well with the Catholic hierarchy at the time since they were using this convenient mechanism to fund construction of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome *(did a note of cynicism just creep in?)*, and Luther was subsequently excommunicated as a heretic. In a nutshell, that was the Reformation.

But did Luther think good works were not important? Absolutely not! He believed that through the grace of God we are saved by faith alone, but because of that faith and that salvation, good works will automatically follow. There you have it: ***Stewardship is (good works are) what we do after we say we believe.*** That's our Lutheran heritage. Celebrate it!

How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help? (1 John 3:17)

* * * * *

Stewardship is the cornerstone of Christianity, and it can be – in fact, should be – fun. We ought to naturally feel happy when we are able to be generous! As individuals we need to be year-round good stewards, but as a congregation we typically focus on stewardship during the fall season. So, as we now sit here in March, officially the beginning of spring though often still quite wintry in Michigan, the Fall 2024 Stewardship Season is only six months away.

But rest assured that the committee is already hard at work preparing for what we hope will be another meaningful and fun stewardship experience. Building on the 2023 focus on gratitude, this year's theme is "Generosity Rooted in Gratitude."

Gratitude is appreciating life's gifts while generosity is sharing those gifts, but the two go hand in hand. Acting generously does not, for a moment, mean not feeling and expressing gratitude at the same time. One definition of generosity is "the willingness to give help or support, especially more than is usual or expected," and that is the mindset that we hope to bolster at Saron, not just during this upcoming fall season, but throughout the years ahead as well. Stay tuned and get ready for another fun experience this fall!

Don Hafer, for the Stewardship Committee

Very little would get done without volunteers.
It takes a village. It takes a congregation. ❤

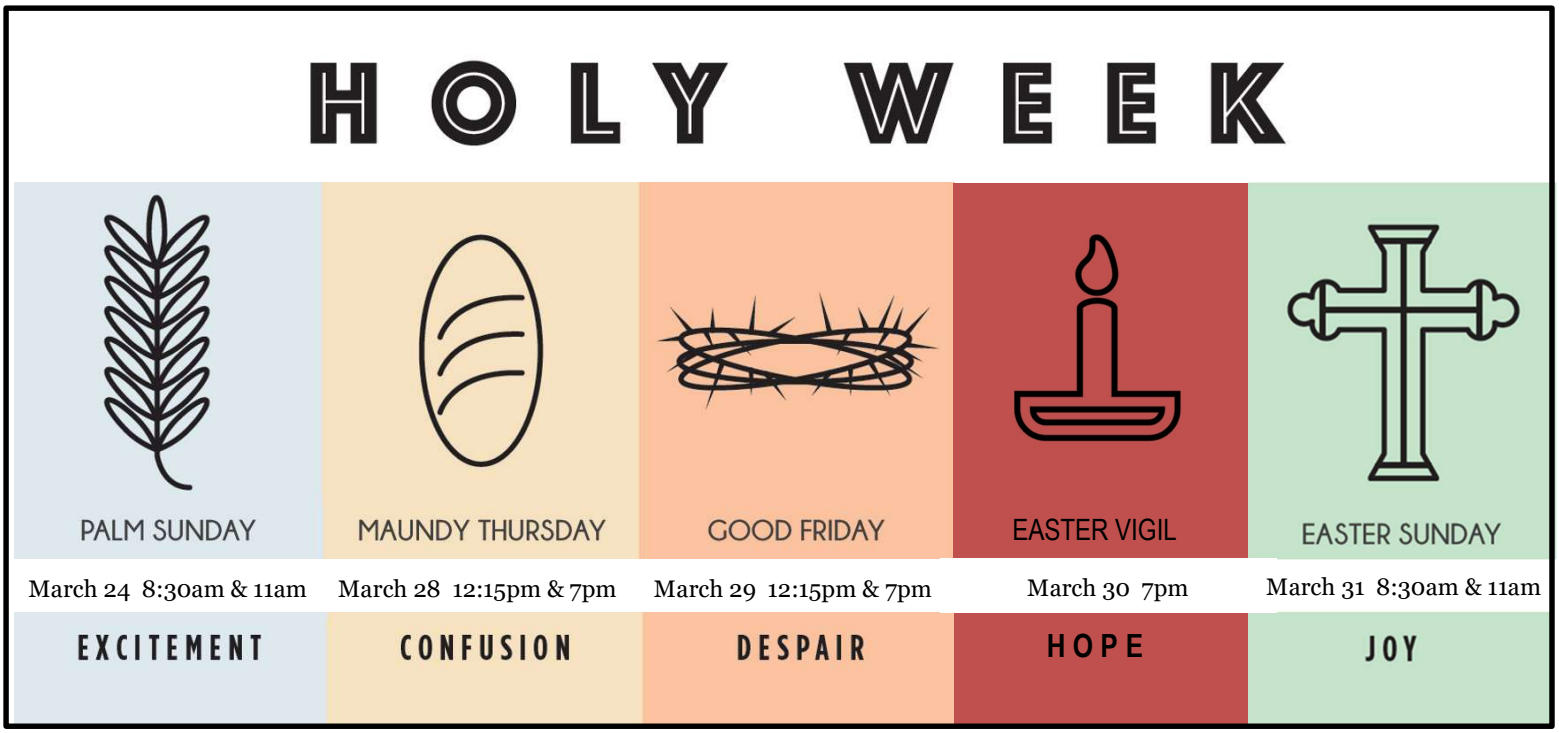
SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email:info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

MARCH 2024 NEWSLETTER

HOLY WEEK



Our 11am and 7pm worship services will also be available via Zoom.
There will be an Easter Breakfast between services with Youth Activities/Egg Hunt beginning around 10:15am.

MARCH 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3 **Noisy Offering** 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Choir & Zoom Option 12:30pm Lenten Study	**4** 11am Prayer Group	**5**	**6** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 6:15pm Soup Supper 7pm Lenten Worship	**7** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**1/8**	**2/9**
10 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Choir & Zoom Option 12:30pm Lenten Study	**11** 11am Prayer Group	**12** 8pm Support Meeting	**13** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 6:15pm Soup Supper 7pm Lenten Worship	**14** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**15**	**16**
17 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Choir & Zoom Option 12:30pm Lenten Study	**18** 11am Prayer Group 7pm Council Meeting	**19**	**20** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 6:15pm Soup Supper 7pm Lenten Worship	**21** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE**	**22**	**23**
24 **PALM SUNDAY** 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Choir & Zoom Option 12:30pm Lenten Study	**25** 11am Prayer Group	**26**	**27** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 6:15pm Soup Supper 7pm Lenten Worship	**28** **MAUNDY THURSDAY** **12:15pm & 7pm** **Soup Kitchen Day**	**29** **GOOD FRIDAY** **12:15pm & 7pm**	**30** **EASTER VIGIL** **7pm**
31 **EASTER SUNDAY** 8:30am Worship 9:40am Breakfast & Youth Activities 11am Worship with Choir & Zoom Option						